DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 893 PS 021 356

AUTHOR Kahen, Vanessa J.
TITLE Parent-Child Interaction and Children's Peer Relationships: The Differential Contributions of Mothers and Fathers to Children's Dyadic Peer Interactions.
PUB DATE Mar 93
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (60th, New Orleans, LA, March 25-28, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; Child Behavior; Fathers; *Interpersonal Competence; Mothers; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Influence; *Peer Relationship; Play; *Preschool Children
IDENTIFIERS *Parenting Styles

ABSTRACT

This study examined how parents' engagement and affect during parent-child interaction related to children's ability to successfully interact with peers. Subjects were 56 families, each with a child between the ages of 4 and 6. Ten-minute interactions were videotaped as parents obtained information about a story previously heard by the child, and taught the child to play a video game. An assessment of children's interaction with their best friend (as identified by the mother) was obtained by audiotaping a 30-minute dyadic peer play session at the homes of the target children. Parenting styles and children's peer play with their best friend were coded. Analysis revealed that fathers' behavior affected how children engaged with others during play. Children of intrusive fathers more often expressed affect when interacting with peers; children of intrusive mothers expressed less positive affect during peer play. Results suggest that children may compensate for some negative parent-child interaction by making attempts to secure positive peer interaction with their best friends. No significant differences between the amount of affect or engagement displayed by either parents towards boys or girls were found. However, correlations indicated that fathers' affect related to boys' peer interaction skills, while mothers' negative affects and engagement appeared to be linked to girls' peer play. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED356893

Parent-Child Interaction and Children's Peer Relationships: The Differential Contributions of Mothers and Fathers to Children's Dyadic Peer Interactions

Vanessa J. Kahen
University of Washington

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PURPOSE

Examine the differential contributions of mothers and fathers to children's dyadic peer relationships. The relationship between parental affect and engagement during parent-child interaction and children's conversation skills, repair and maintenance skills, level of play, and affect during dyadic peer play was examined.

ABSTRACT

In this study we examined how mothers' and fathers' use of engagement and affect during parent-child interaction differentially related to children's ability to successfully interact with peers. Children's dyadic peer interaction was examined in order to yield greater specificity in making linkages between specific parenting behaviors and specific peer interaction skills. Observational data was collected on 56 families in both parent-child and peer interaction settings.

Variables

Parent-child interaction variables:

Kahen Affect Coding System (**KACS**): 7 variables (3 positive, 3 negative, 1 neutral)
Kahen Engagement Coding System (**KECS**): 7 variables (3 positive, 3 negative, 1 neutral)

Peer interaction variables:

R-MACRO Coding System (Gottman, 1983): 43 variables (21 positive, 22 negative)

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Vanessa Kahen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

PS 021356

* SRCD 1993

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Results

(1) **Fathers'** behavior (both affect and engagement) was found to affect the degree to which **children engage with others** during play.
(2) Children of **intrusive fathers** were found to be more likely to **express affect** when interacting with peers.
(3) Children of **intrusive mothers** were found to express **less positive affect** during dyadic peer play.
(4) Children may **compensate** for some negative parent-child interaction by making attempts to secure positive peer interaction with their best friends.
(5) **Affect:** A relationship was found between mothers' and fathers' use of affect during parent-child interaction and children's dyadic peer play.
(6) **Gender differences:** Father-child interaction was linked to boys' peer interaction where mother-child interaction was linked to girls' peer interaction.

METHODS

Subjects

- 56 families
- Children: 4-6 years old

Assessments

Parent-Child Laboratory Visit: Parents were instructed to obtain information about a story previously heard by the child, and then to teach the child to play a video game. The interaction lasted 10 minutes and videotaped observational data was obtained on all three family members.

Peer Interaction Home Visit: An assessment of children's peer interaction with his/her best friend (as identified by the mother) was obtained by audiotaping a 30-minute dyadic peer play session at the home of the target child.

Measures

Observational coding of Parent-Child interaction: Parenting styles were coded using the Kahen Engagement Coding System (KECS) and the Kahen Affect Coding System (KACS). KECS consists of 7 parental engagement codes, including 3 positive, 3 negative, and 1 neutral does. KACS also consists of 7 parental affect codes (3 positive, 3 negative, 1 neutral).

Parent-Child Interaction Variables.

Kahen Engagement Coding System (KECS)

	Positive	Negative
Engagement:	Engaged	Disengaged
	Positive Directive	Negative Directive
	Responds to Child's Needs	Intrusive
		Neutral Engagement
		(Other)

Kahen Affect Coding System (KACS)

	Positive	Negative
Affect:	Affection	Criticism
	Enthusiasm	Anger
	Humor	Inappropriate Humor
		Neutral Affect

The total number of times each variable occurred in the 10 minute parent-child interaction session was recorded and totals (across time) were calculated for each of the 14 parent-child interaction variables. Engagement and affect dimensions were coded by independent observers.

Coding of Peer Interaction: The Rapid Macro (R-MACRO) peer interaction coding system (Gottman, 1983) was used to code best friend peer play. The R-MACRO consists of 43 specific behaviors (21 positive, 22 negative) that index children's coordination of play using 4 general categories were used. Each category was coded as negative and positive.

R-MACRO
Peer Interaction Variables.

	Positive	Negative
Conversation:	Information Exchange Success	Information Exchange Failure
	Self Disclosure Success	Self Disclosure Failure
	Explore Similarities	Explore Differences
	Gossip Success	Gossip Failure
Repair and Maintenance:	Conflict Management	Bad Conflict Management
	Connected Interaction	Monologue
	Message Clarification	Failure to Clarify
		Out of Room Disruption
Level of Play:	Positive Parallel Play	Negative Parallel Play
	Common Ground Success	Common Ground Failure
	Fantasy Play	Failure to Fantasy Play
	Non-Stereotyped Fantasy Play	Parental Direction
Affect:	Affection	Conflict
	Laughter	Anger
	Joy/Excitement	Whining
	Humor/Wit	Crying
	Sympathy	Negative Statements
	Sharing/Consideration	Bossiness/Dominance
	Affirmation/Validation	Fighting
	Compliment	Sadness/Unhappiness
	Positive Teasing	Negative Teasing
	Positive Other	Negative Other

Peer interaction was coded in a checklist format, so that all behaviors that occurred within a 3-minute period were coded. Totals for individual codes were calculated by summing the frequency of each code's occurrence across all 3-minute periods.

RESULTS

Correlations were computed between the parent-child and peer interaction variables to assess whether mother-child and father-child interaction have a differential impact on children's peer interaction.

Fathers' Engagement:		Peer Behavior:
Respond to child's needs	_____	Explore similarities (r=.45, $p \leq$.001)
Engaged	_____	Monologue (r=-.29, $p \leq$.05)
Positive Directive	_____	Monologue (r=.38, $p \leq$.001)
Positive Directive	_____	Explore similarities (r=-.29, $p \leq$.05)
Negative Directive	_____	Monologue (r=.27, $p \leq$.05)

Fathers' Affect:		Peer Behavior:
Affection	_____	Self disclose (r=.39, $p \leq$.01)
Enthusiasm	_____	Self disclose (r=.35, $p \leq$.01)
Humor	_____	Monologue (r=-.28, $p \leq$.05)
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Monologue (r=.36, $p \leq$.01)
Affectively Neutral	_____	Self disclose (r=-.33, $p \leq$.05)

Fathers' behavior, both engagement and affect, largely seemed to affect the degree to which children engaged with others during play. Results indicate that when fathers' parenting behaviors were negative, children engaged in solitary play rather than attempting to coordinate play with their best friends. This pattern was evident in both positive and negative directiveness. Both types of directive statements, those phrased in a positive tone (positive directiveness) and those phrased in a negative tone (negative directiveness) were related to children's solitary activity during peer interaction. No evidence was apparent linking mother-child interaction to a children's' level of interpersonal engagement during peer interactions.

Findings also suggest that children of fathers who exhibited negative engagement during parent-child interaction were more likely to express negative affect when playing with peers. In addition, these children were more likely to terminate peer interaction.

Fathers' Negative Engagement:		**Peer Behavior:**
Intrusive	_____	Cry (r=.44, $p \leq$.001)
Intrusive	_____	Affection (r=.52, $p \leq$.0001)
Intrusive	_____	Out of Room (r=.38, $p \leq$.01)
Negative directive	_____	Anger (r=.31, $p \leq$.05)

Children of intrusive mothers were expressing less joy and laughter during dyadic play.

Mothers' Negative Engagement:		**Peer Behavior:**
Intrusive	_____	Laugh (r=-.27, $p \leq$.05)
Intrusive	_____	Joy (r=-.31, $p \leq$.05)

Results also suggest that a compensatory model may be operative. For example, intrusive fathers tended to have children who were affectionate with peers and negative directive fathers had children who were more sympathetic during peer interaction. Children whose mothers were disengaged and inappropriately humorous tended to share, explore similarities and engage in conflict management when playing with best friends. Hence, it seems as though children compensate for some negative parent-child interaction by making attempts to secure positive peer interaction with their best friends. Furthermore, this compensatory response was found when either mothers or fathers displayed negative engagement during parent-child interaction.

Parenting Style:		**Peer Behavior:**
Father intrusive	_____	Affection (r=.52, $p \leq$.0001)
Father Intrusive	_____	Positive Parallel Play (r=.39, $p \leq$.001)
Criticism	_____	Positive Parallel Play (r=.38, $p \leq$.01)
Father negative directive	_____	Sympathy (r=.32, $p \leq$.05)
Mother disengaged	_____	Share (r=.34, $p \leq$.01)
Mother disengaged	_____	Explore similarities (r=.31, $p \leq$.05)
Mother inappropriate humor	_____	Conflict management (r=.33, $p \leq$.05)

Affect:

Children of fathers who exhibited negative affect during parent-child interaction tended to display negative peer behaviors. Furthermore, fathers' positive affect was linked to children's ability to maintain positive parallel play during peer interactions.

Fathers' Negative Affect:		Peer Behavior:
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Information Exchange Failure (r=.31, $p \leq$.05)
Criticism	_____	Bossy (r=.31, $p \leq$.01)

Fathers' Positive Affect:		Peer Behavior:
Affection	_____	Positive Parallel Play (r=.37, $p \leq$.01)
Enthusiasm	_____	Positive Parallel Play (r=.51, $p \leq$.0001)

Additional results indicate that when mothers' were negatively affective during parent-child interaction their children appeared to be disengaged and were unable to achieve connected interactions. Side by side play was the highest level of interaction successfully obtained by these children.

Mothers' Negative Affect:		Peer Behavior:
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Information Exchange (r=-.39, $p \leq$.01)
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Connected Interaction (r=-.39, $p \leq$.01)
Criticism	_____	Common Ground Success (r=-.35, $p \leq$.01)
Anger	_____	Positive Parallel Play (r=.34, $p \leq$.01)

Mothers' Positive Affect:		Peer Behavior:
Affection	_____	Information Exchange (r=-.34, $p \leq .01$)
Affection	_____	Connected Interaction (r=-.35, $p \leq .01$)
Humor	_____	Gossip Failure (r=.34, $p \leq .01$)
Humor	_____	Self Disclose Failure (r=.47, $p \leq .001$)
Humor	_____	Out of Room (r=.44, $p \leq .001$)
Humor	_____	Parent (r=.45, $p \leq .001$)

The relationship found between mother positive affect and children's peer interaction was counter intuitive, since mothers who used more positive affect were more likely to have children who failed to exhibit positive peer interaction skills. One explanation found for these results was that mothers who exhibited high amounts of positive affect also exhibited high amounts of negative affect or engagement when interacting with their children. These mothers appear to be emotionally volatile and exhibit high levels of emotion which may be a negative experience for children.

Gender Differences:

No significant differences were found between the amount of affect or engagement displayed by either mothers or fathers towards boys or girls. However, correlations indicate that fathers' affect tended to be related to boys' peer interaction skills, where mothers' negative affect and engagement appeared to be linked to girls' dyadic peer play.

Fathers' Positive Affect:		**Boys' Peer Interaction Behavior:**
Affection	_____	Self disclose (r=.56, $p\leq$.001)
Affection	_____	Validation (r=.49, $p\leq$.01)
Enthusiasm	_____	Self disclose (r=.56, $p\leq$.001)
Enthusiasm	_____	Validation (r=.57, $p\leq$.001)

Fathers' Negative Affect:		**Boys' Peer Interaction Behavior:**
Anger	_____	Information exchange (r=-.61, $p\leq$.001)
Anger	_____	Connected interaction (r=-.61, $p\leq$.001)

Mothers' Negative Affect:		**Girls' Peer Interaction Behavior:**
Criticism	_____	Whining (r=.50, $p\leq$.01)
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Out of room (r=.57, $p\leq$.01)
Inappropriate Humor	_____	Negative teasing (r=.50, $p\leq$.01)
Anger	_____	Out of room (r=.46, $p\leq$.01)

Mothers' Negative Engagement:		**Girls' Peer Interaction behavior:**
Negative directive	_____	Connected interaction (r=-.65, $p\leq$.001)
Negative directive	_____	Self disclose failure (r=.53, $p\leq$.01)

REFERENCES

Gottman, J. M. (1983). How children become friends. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 48 (2, Serial No. 201).